



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**VIRGINIA RECEIVES FEDERAL GRANT TO ESTABLISH A CRISIS COUNSELING PROGRAM  
TO RESPOND TO THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF COVID-19**

*A new warm line will support those struggling with trauma, grief and distress caused by COVID-19*

**\*\*\*UPDATE: JUNE 12, 2020\*\*\***

*The warm line number and hours have been established:*

**(877) 349-6428 Toll Free**

**9:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M. Monday - Friday**

**5:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M. Saturday and Sunday**

**RICHMOND, VA** – The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) announced that Virginia has received a \$391,655 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help respond to the behavioral health impacts of COVID-19 by developing a crisis counseling program.

DBHDS will implement the crisis counseling program with the primary objective of establishing a statewide warm line for emotional support, active listening and referrals for Virginians who find it difficult to cope with the impacts of COVID-19. Unlike services such as 9-1-1 that are reserved for emergencies, a warm line provides someone experiencing behavioral health issues with an easy way to discuss daily struggles. DBHDS will first enter into an agreement with Mental Health America of Virginia (MHAVA) to provide warm line support and referral resources to Virginians impacted by COVID-19 in Virginia. DBHDS is planning to partner with the Virginia Association of Community Services Boards (VACSB) to be the second service provider as the program becomes more well-known and demand increases. These services will be available to every citizen in the Commonwealth. The contact information for the warm line will be widely publicized as soon as it is available.

“Virginia does not currently have a statewide process or entity to assist citizens with the trauma, grief and overall distress caused by COVID-19,” **said DBHDS Commissioner Alison Land**. “The scope and scale of COVID-19, combined with Virginia’s diverse geography, demographics, and local resources make responding to the pandemic very complex. This grant is critical to help us reach Virginians who are struggling with COVID-19’s behavioral health impacts and need a listening ear and guidance, especially the most vulnerable.”

DBHDS will coordinate the planning, program implementation and data collection associated with the crisis counseling program. The program will specifically target those directly impacted, the high population regions as well as rural areas, essential workers, unemployed Virginians and populations with access and functional needs. In addition, DBHDS will coordinate outreach strategies with Virginia’s new Health Equity Workgroup (HEWG). Virginia established the HEWG as part of the Unified Command during COVID-19 and charged it with applying a health equity lens to Virginia’s response for vulnerable and underserved populations.

The grant amount lasts until June 30, 2020 with a possible extension for up to nine months.

Common COVID-19 issues are loneliness, fear of uncertainty, old grief returning, anxiety about health or infection, workplace or financial stress, sleep trouble, drinking more alcohol/using prescription medications more than usual. DBHDS' resources to help at [www.dbhds.virginia.gov/covid19](http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/covid19).

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*The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) seeks to promote dignity, choice, recovery, and the highest possible level of participation in work, relationships, and all aspects of community life for individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities or substance-use disorders. DBHDS operates 12 state facilities and partners with 40 locally-run community services boards and hundreds of private providers statewide. For more information, please visit [www.dbhds.virginia.gov](http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#).*